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Message Text

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22-11
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

/058 W
---------- 032949
R 250945Z NOV 75
FM AMCONSUL LAHORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0651
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMCONSUL KARACHI

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJECT: BHUTTO COMMENTS IN BAHAWALPUR RE GENERAL ELECTIONS
AND REORGANIZATION OF PPP

1. DURING OFFICIAL VISIT TO BAHAWALPUR DIVISION NOVEMBER 21-23, PRIMIN BHUTTO PUBLICLY ADDRESSED VARIOUS TOPICS, MOST IMPORTANT OF WHICH CONCERNED GENERAL ELECTIONS AND REORGANIZATION OF PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (PPP). TALKING TO NEWSMEN ON ARRIVAL, PRIMIN REPORTEDLY ASSERTED HIS VISIT WAS ROUTINE AND HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH GENERAL ELECTIONS. HE CONCEDED, HOWEVER, THAT ALL HIS TOURS WERE "POLITICAL AND OFFICIAL" IN SENSE THAT THEY WERE PART OF HIS DUTIES. (EARLIER SAME DAY, WHILE TRANSITTING MULTAN, PRIMIN DECLARED THAT GENERAL ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD "AT PROPER TIME" AND IN FAIR AND PEACEFUL MANNER.)

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS THE PRIMIN, ADDRESSING PARTY WORKERS AND LEGISLATORS FOLLOWING DAY, DECLARED THAT GENERAL ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD "ON SCHEDULE AS PROVIDED IN CONSTITUTION," BUT NOTED THAT PPP PARTY ELECTIONS WOULD NOT BE CONDUCTED UNTIL "A SUITABLE TIME AFTERWARDS." HE SAID HIS VISIT TO BAHAWALPUR WAS BEGINNING OF SERIES OF TRIPS AROUND
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PUNJAB TO "REORGANIZE PARTY...ON REVOLUTIONARY LINES SO PROBLEMS

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NATION WAS FACING COULD BE SOLVED UNDER PPP LEADERSHIP."
PRIMIN REPORTEDLY EXPLAINED AT LENGTH THAT PARTY ELECTIONS
HAD BEEN DELAYED BECAUSE OF "OMINOUS PROBLEMS CONCERNING
VERY EXISTENCE OF COUNTRY" WHICH AROSE AS PPP CAME TO POWER.
ELECTIONS HAD BEEN FURTHER DELAYED, HE SAID, TO ALLOW TIME TO
ASSESS CAPABILITIES OF PARTY WORKERS TO INSURE THAT ONLY THOSE
WHO WERE "DEDICATED, HONEST AND HARD-WORKING" WOULD BE ELECTED.

3. COMMENT: PRIMIN HAS BEEN MUCH IN EVIDENCE IN PUNJAB
DURING LAST TWO WEEKS. TRIP TO BAHAWALPUR WAS HIS SECOND
HERE SINCE NOVEMBER 11 WHEN HE ANNOUNCED LAND REVENUE REFORMS
DURING FOUR-DAY VISIT TO LAHORE, AND A THIRD IS SCHEDULED FOR
MULTAN NOVEMBER 28-30.
PRIMIN IS CLEARLY ENDEAVORING TO STRENGTHEN
HIS POSITION IN PUNJAB, ERODED TO SOME EXTENT BY RECENT
DEFECTIONS FROM PPP AND CRITICISMS OF HIS LEADERSHIP. HIS
APPEAL TO PARTY SO FAR, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN RATHER WEAK, AND
SOMEWHAT CONTRADICTORY. WHILE PROCLAIMING BAHAWALPUR VISIT
A KICK-OFF FOR CAMPAIGN TO "REORGANIZE" PPP, PRIMIN ACKNOWLEDGED
IN NEXT BREATH THAT INTRA-PARTY POLL -- SEEMINGLY LOGICAL
STEP IN PREPARING PPP TO SEEK NATIONWIDE ELECTORAL MANDATE --
WOULD NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL AFTER GENERAL ELECTIONS. THIS APPROACH
CONFIRMS PRIMIN'S INTENTION TO CONTINUE CONTROL PARTY AFFAIRS
THROUGH APPOINTED OFFICIALS OF HIS CHOICE.

4. FOR PRESENT, IT APPEARS PRIMIN IS DOING LITTLE MORE THAN
ATTEMPTING TO KEEP PARTY TOGETHER WHILE HE SNIFFS WIND TO
GAUGE STRENGTH OF OPPOSITION AND DETERMINE BEST TIME FOR
HOLDING GENERAL ELECTIONS. DESPITE RECENT DEFECTIONS, PPP
IS STILL ON TOP IN PUNJAB, AND MATTER OF ELECTIONS, GENERAL
OR OTHERWISE, LOOKS INCREASINGLY ACADEMIC, CONSIDERING GOVERN-
MENT'S PROVEN WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO MANIPULATE THEM TO
ITS ADVANTAGE.
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